



ZELDA 64: THE OCARINA OF

WITHOUT A DOUBT THE MOST IMPRESSIVE GAME AT THE SHOW. THOUGH THE VERSION OF THE GAME AT THE SHOW WAS ONLY A CUT-DOWN DEMO, IT STILL SHOWED THAT ZELDA 64 LOOKS SET TO BE THE MOST SPECTACULAR N64 GAME YET!

LINK'S FAIRY COMPANION IS CALLED NAVIE, AND SHE FLITS ABOUT HIS HEAD AS HE TRAVELS, WARNING HIM OF DANGER IN A JAPANESE VOICE SO HIGH-PITCHED THAT DOGS INVOLUNTARILY

LOSE BLADDER CONTROL. SHE CAN ALSO CARRY CERTAIN OBJECTS, FREEING UP LINK'S HANDS FOR THOSE ALL-IMPORTANT WEAPONS.

FIGHTING IS EXCELLENTLY DONE, LINK BEING ABLE TO SWITCH BETWEEN ATTACK AND DEFENCE IN AN INSTANT WITH THE DEFAULT SETUP. IF A MORE POWERFUL WEAPON LIKE A BROADSWORD IS NEEDED, LINK HAS TO USE BOTH HANDS — THIS CAUSES MORE DAMAGE TO



the icons on screen correspond to controller buttons. B (green) is an action button, used to open treasure chests, enter doors, talk to characters and the like; A (blue) brings up and uses the current weapon; and the lower three C buttons (yellow) use whichever items you've assigned to them, from boomerangs to bombs. R brings up Link's shield and Z locks the viewpoint, which is useful in combat as it lets you keep aiming at the enemy without the hassle of constantly adjusting to a circling viewpoint. Whenever the viewpoint is

locked, or Link is performing an action, borders crop the screen to give it a widescreen effect. There's no reason for it, other than it looks cool!

The monsters on show in the demo included killer plants (a lot like the Piranha Plants from *Mario 64*), giant lizards, skeletons, dinosaurs and a sort of piranha fish that swims through sand instead of water! Link can bring up his shield at any time to defend himself, a seamless action that makes fighting much more than just one side hacking away at the other — especially when Link's enemies have shields of their own!

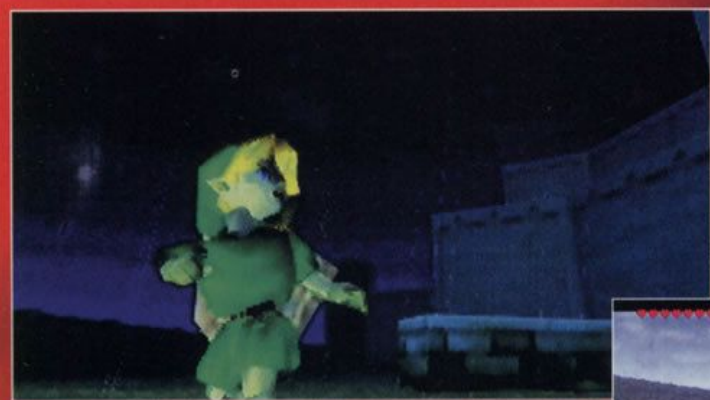
Concerns that *Zelda 64* would turn out to be a *Tomb Raider* clone seem to



TIME

HIS OPPONENTS, BUT HE CAN'T USE HIS SHIELD!

THE BAD NEWS IS THAT ZELDA 64 HAS BEEN DELAYED AGAIN, THE CURRENT RELEASE DATE NOW SCHEDULED FOR APRIL IN JAPAN. WE'LL HAVE TO WAIT JUST A LITTLE BIT LONGER FOR WHAT MIGHT BE THE MOST AMAZING VIDEOGAME OF ALL TIME...



be unfounded. Link has his fair share of climbing and jumping around, but he does it automatically when it's needed. No plunging into a pool of lava because you're a millisecond late on the jump button! The main problem facing players is knowing *where* to let Link do his stuff; because *Zelda 64* uses the N64's graphics in a 'realistic' way, the days of spotting obvious pathways and hidden doors are over, and you have to seek them out just

like in real life. An example I was shown was of a secret passage in a cave, which could be opened up with a bomb – if you didn't know of the possibility of secret passages, you'd probably think that the slight discolouration of a wall was nothing out of the ordinary. Once you get your mind into *Zelda* mode, though, these things begin to stand out.



Combat obviously plays a major part in the game. Using Link's shield and weapon is an extremely intuitive experience, the real trick to combat being to get into range of an enemy without letting them rip you to shreds. Locking the viewpoint with the Z trigger makes this a lot easier, so you just have to master the proper use of the analogue stick to make small precise steps and turns. Some of the creatures Link fights have fairly straightforward attack patterns

that leave them vulnerable at certain points, like the killer plants; if Link keeps his shield up while they dart forward and snap at him, there is a brief pause when they have to recover their strength and can be hacked with impunity. The more intelligent monsters obviously need more complicated tactics to defeat, though if all else fails, thrashing away madly with Link's sword can get in some licks!

Zelda 64: The Ocarina Of Time

certainly seems as though it's going to be superb when it's finished –

you can read my editorial this issue for my thoughts on how it could go down in Japan (where I suspect it might not receive quite the welcome it will in Europe and the US), but it's still impressive to note that though it had the most playable copies of any game at the show, it was still by far the hardest to get a go on – even when Nintendo president Hiroshi Yamuuchi's keynote speech had largely emptied the other stands...

BANJO & KAZOOIE

It was rather easier to get a go on *Banjo & Kazooie's Great Adventure* (or *Banjo-Kazooie* as it'll be called over here), despite the efforts of a team of Japanese beauties in tight sweaters and PVC shorts to draw the

punters. (If you're wondering what they could possibly have to do with *Banjo & Kazooie*, they were all wearing little Banjo-style backpacks, though thankfully without crap redneck musical instruments. Hell, it was a good enough connection to get me over to the stand!)

The lack of attention wasn't because the game was *bad*, far from it. It looked and played like *Mario 64* on speed, with more detail, bigger landscapes, loads of amusingly characterised beasts (rampaging gorillas, short-sighted moles, raging bulls), bargeloads of special effects and plenty of neat touches involving the different abilities of the protagonists. The problem was... well, it looked and played like *Mario 64*! There may be differences in the specific details, but ultimately that's how it felt, which might explain why



BANJO & KAZOOIE

A BEAR, A BIRD, A GAGGLE OF CUTE GIRLS IN YELLOW PVC SHORTS – THAT WAS THE *BANJO & KAZOOIE* STAND! NOW NEARING COMPLETION, RARE'S SECOND-GENERATION MARIOALIKE IS LOOKING PROMISING, WITH A MUCH MORE LUSH AND SPRAWLING LANDSCAPE FOR THE TITULAR TWOSOME TO EXPLORE.

BECAUSE OF NINTENDO'S WRETCHED 'NO PHOTOGRAPHY' POLICY (I TRIED, BUT THERE SEEMED TO BE ABOUT THREE ATTENDANTS FOR EVERY MEMBER OF THE PRESS, AND IT'S HARD TO REFUSE WHEN THE AFOREMENTIONED CUTE GIRLS POLITELY BUT FIRMLY INTERJECT THEMSELVES BETWEEN THE SCREEN AND YOUR LENS WITH A BOW AND A SINGSONG REQUEST OF "PLEASE, NO PHOTOGRAPH") I COULDN'T GET ANY SHOTS OF THE MORE INTERESTING-LOOKING LATER LEVELS, SO FOR NOW YOU'LL HAVE TO MAKE DO WITH THE ONES FROM THE PRESS DISK. DOH! STILL, YOU CAN SEE IN ONE SHOT THAT KAZOOIE IS CARRYING BANJO – THIS IS VITAL IN SOME AREAS, AS BANJO IS CRAP AT CLIMBING HILLS, BUT KAZOOIE'S CLAWS LET HER SCUTTLE RIGHT UP THEM WITHOUT SLIPPING!

